

St. Matthew's *Baptist Church*

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THE BIRTH OF A BLESSING

"But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (KJV) ~ Galatians 4:4-5

The birth of Jesus Christ, the only man who never sinned, the only begotten son of God the Father, was and is a blessing. It was in God's plan for Jesus to be born and for Him to die. We love Jesus and wish He didn't have to die for us, however we also know that without His sacrifice we would be sentenced to death and hell for eternity. Let's review reasons why the birth of Jesus Christ was so significant:

- I. **We needed to be reconnected.** Once Adam and Eve disobeyed the Lord and sinned against God, mankind was eternally lost and disconnected from God. Jesus had to be born to save us from our sins so we could be reconnected with God.
- II. **We needed a Perfect sacrifice to be saved.** The earlier physical sacrifices of animals were imperfect. They could only provide temporary ceremonial cleansing. This was a ritual that God instructed His people to participate in because it taught the lesson that sacrifices were necessary because of our sins. However without a true perfect sacrifice, humanity was doomed. So God sent Jesus, to be the true and perfect sacrifice to wash away our sins and give us hope beyond the grave.
- III. **We needed a mediator.** Jesus is the mediator between God the Father and us as His children. In John 14:6 Jesus tells us that He is "the way, the truth and the life" and that no man comes to the Father except through Him. Even though the shed blood of Christ washes away our sins, we are all still sinners. The only way that a Holy God can see us or hear us is if He is looking at us through Jesus. We only have access to God's forgiveness and mercy through faith in the finished work (death, burial and resurrection) of Jesus Christ.



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- IV. **We needed an example.** There is only one sinless man and that is Jesus Christ. He had to show us by example how to be godly, righteous, and obedient in all that we do.
- V. **To fulfill the divine purpose for man.** Due to their rebellion and sin, Adam and Eve failed to carry out the ultimate purpose for mankind which was to Glorify God. Therefore God the Father had to send Jesus to fulfill the revelation and God's purpose for man.
- VI. **To fulfill the scriptures.** God promised Abraham that through his "seed" all nations would be blessed. (Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:14-16) God also promised a "redeemer" to Adam and Eve before He cast them out of the garden. Hebrews 9:9-12 also says that the promised redeemer would come and pay the ultimate price for sin. Jesus had to be born for mankind to be redeemed from sin.

Through Jesus Christ, God restored what was lost in the Garden after Satan was able to convince Adam and Eve to disobey God. The wages of sin is death and the only way mankind could be saved from eternal damnation was through the sacrifice of Jesus. As we celebrate this wonderful Christmas season, it's good for us to reflect on all that the Lord has done just for us. He continues to intercede for us every single day. His faithfulness and love knows no boundaries. He truly is a blessing!

Ward, Donald. "Seven Reasons Why Jesus Was Born." *United Church of God*. N.p., 24 Apr. 2002. Web. 6 Oct. 2016.

"The Deep Significance of the Birth of Jesus Christ | Bibles for America." N.p., n.d. Web. 5 Oct. 2016.

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign:
Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son,
and shall call His name Immanuel.
Isaiah 7:14

PASTOR'S CORNER



As we Venture into our Vision, God has Communicated, Confirmed, and Compelled us to see His strategic plans for our Church & CDC. Our objectives are to continually promote our Christ through our Mouths, Media and Ministry. We are in the environment of Apathy, Appeasement, and Apostasy. In these last days dedication to our Christ will be costly.

We must fight through Venoms of the world, and being Victims within ourselves, especially when we feel isolated and lonely. We cannot chase "happiness" and self-acceptance, we must instead remain steadfast and strong for his purposes. We thank the Lord Jesus Christ as He continually supplies all of our needs. Praise the Lord! Pastor loves you!

Pastor Raymond Gordon

A Thankful Heart Is A Joyful Heart

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

"Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (KJV)

We have so much to be grateful for in life, more than we can truly fathom. It's a fact that in America our pets eat better than some humans around the world. However we have a tendency to focus on our struggles, worries and difficulties which can often leave us feeling distant from God or maybe even feeling that He doesn't care. The reality is that if we made a list of the things we should be grateful for and then another list of our problems, they wouldn't even begin to compare because we are truly blessed to be able to walk, talk, breathe, etc. If you are living in a shelter with your 4 kids and you only have 2 sets of clothes, there is someone else who lives in a country where there are no shelters and they don't have clothes. God is Good!

Our ability to see the Lord's blessings during the painful situations that come up in life makes a difference. As Christians, how can we win souls for Jesus if we are miserable? Joy is necessary to navigate hard times. Knowing that the person who advocates for you is also the most powerful person in the world should make you feel secure, joyful and thankful. Having a grateful heart allows us to put things in proper perspective in the following ways:

- ◆ It allows us to focus on the many blessings in our lives which puts our eyes back on Jesus.

- ◆ It provides comfort as it reminds us that we are not in control, but we serve an All-powerful God who is in control.
- ◆ It promotes humility as we are able to reflect on how good God is, how undeserving we are, and how much we need Him.
- ◆ It can take our attention off of our problems allowing us to focus on what is most important in life.
- ◆ It allows us to adjust our attitudes. Maybe we are comparing ourselves to others, or we are focused on obtaining things, or success, or fame rather than praising and serving the Lord.

Shifting our focus from the negative to Jesus and the many blessings he bestows upon us, can transform our lives, our relationships, and our spiritual walk. We have a choice about how we react to each circumstance every day. We can choose to be grateful, and filled with the joy of the Lord. Or we can choose to obsess about things that we ultimately don't have much control over. Positive and wonderful things are happening around us every day, reasons to praise the name of Jesus are happening every moment, we just need to identify them. When we offer God praise and thanksgiving, He responds and fills our hearts with joy and contentment. An attitude of gratitude is powerful. Rejoice in the Lord always and delight in His joy.

Deep Faith

"And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." (NIV) ~ Hebrews 11:6

Deep faith is a strong acceptance of that which we cannot see, an unwavering belief in the Lord Jesus Christ that holds strong in any situation. When we think of people in the bible who exemplified deep faith, many immediately think of Abraham, Noah, and Daniel just to name a few. We can understand that it had to be overwhelmingly difficult to bring your child whom you love dearly to the top of a mountain to sacrifice him, or how hard it is to deal with the backlash from people as you try to be obedient to God and build a huge ark when it isn't even raining, or the fear that Daniel must have experienced when being placed into a Lion's den.

However, the Lord chose these men and many others because he knew they had deep faith. He delivered each of them from their traumatic situations and blessed them abundantly for their faith. When the Lord chooses you, He also provides all that you need. All you need is faith, and even that faith is a gift from Him. This high level of faith is only achieved through experience with the Lord. We have to get to know Him because it is that knowledge of Him and the experience of His power that builds solid trust. If our lives are filled only with victory and joy many of us would never even reach out to the Lord. We may say "thank you Jesus", and "I'm blessed", but we would likely depend on our own understanding, and as a result our faith begins to fade. However when we are low, desperate, without answers, and frustrated by the circumstances of life, we reach out. That is when we scream His name and cry out with a belief that He will hear us and step in. That is when we pull up the promises and learn to walk in the authority of His word.

The true key to deep faith is obedience. It is the measuring rod that God uses to see how much we really believe His word. If we believe Him we trust Him, and if we trust Him we do as He says. Realistically it can be difficult (not impossible) to keep your eyes on Jesus in the midst of our storms. It's easy to focus on the problems and to be overwhelmed by our feelings. Sometimes it is not that we are willfully disobedient, but we underestimate God's abilities. We have to stop looking at our own limitations and putting them on the Lord. The enemy uses the tricks of discomfort, discouragement and doubt to try and stop us from being effective in our walk with the Lord. However our victorious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ turns it around and uses those same circumstances to show us who He is, His power, and His love for us. If we can just look up, if we can just open our bibles, if we can just pray, if we can just sing a song of worship, it can stop the enemy from running a muck in our minds and help us to reset our focus.

We serve an understanding God. All He wants is for you to come to Him. You can come broken, crying, angry, confused, and tired, and our God will be right there listening and feeling with you. He moves when you surrender to Him. Don't live in faithlessness, stand steadfast in your faith. Pray fervently and ask God to give you an unmovable faith and to allow you to keep your focus on Him. A wavering faith will get us nowhere, but a deep faith will put us right where we need to be in order to be blessed.

"How Deep Is Your Faith?" *Inspiration Ministries*. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Nov. 2016.

Warren, Pastor Rick. "God Pushes You Toward A Deeper Faith." *Pastorrick.com*. N.p., 24 May 2014. Web. 20 Oct. 2016.

Opening the Closet Door

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved". (NIV) ~ Ephesians 2:4-5

The difficulty with being transparent is the vulnerability factor. When we allow people to know us intimately and closely, we run the risk of being rejected. Two beautiful traits of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ are His faithfulness and His mercy. Jesus knows you, the real you, and He still loves you. He knows all about everything in your "secret closet" and He still loves you. The crazy thing is that we all have a secret closet, we all think no one knows about it and that we are alone in our struggles. If anyone ever found out what we really think, what we really do, how we really feel, that they will most certainly reject us, be disappointed in us and maybe even disgusted by us. What's in these secret closets? There are spirits of jealousy, anger, adultery, fornication, greed, abuse, divisiveness, doubt, disobedience, selfishness, etc. The list is long and our closets are full. (For the person reading this that thinks, "My closet isn't full", your closet is full of self-righteousness and pride. Just thought I'd mention that.)

However the one person that will never reject you, is also the one person from whom we try the hardest to hide. Just like Adam and Eve we have our fig leaves on and we are playing the worst game of hide and seek with the best seeker ever, Jesus Christ! I am here to tell you Saints that you don't have to hide anymore. We aren't fooling anybody anyway. It doesn't matter what other people think because they don't have a heaven or a hell to put you in and they have a secret closet too! Jesus knows and He loves you anyhow, He knows and He selected you to be one of His saved children anyhow, He knows and He wants to bless you anyhow. Jesus wants us to have solace and peace knowing that He loves us and all we have to do is reach out to Him, pray for His power to help us deal with everything that is not of Him, ask for Him to intercede in the areas where we don't have the strength to stop sinning, and even the areas where you don't yet want to stop sinning. We have to pray for a hatred for sin, we have to pray for Him to help us to see things the way He sees them. All throughout the bible the Lord has used imperfect people to carry out His plans. You don't need to be the next Moses and you'll never be Jesus, but we absolutely need to strive everyday to love Him, to be obedient to Him, to trust Him, and to emulate the behavior of Jesus Christ who loves us and blesses us despite our secret closets. Open the closet door and let Jesus help you clean up!